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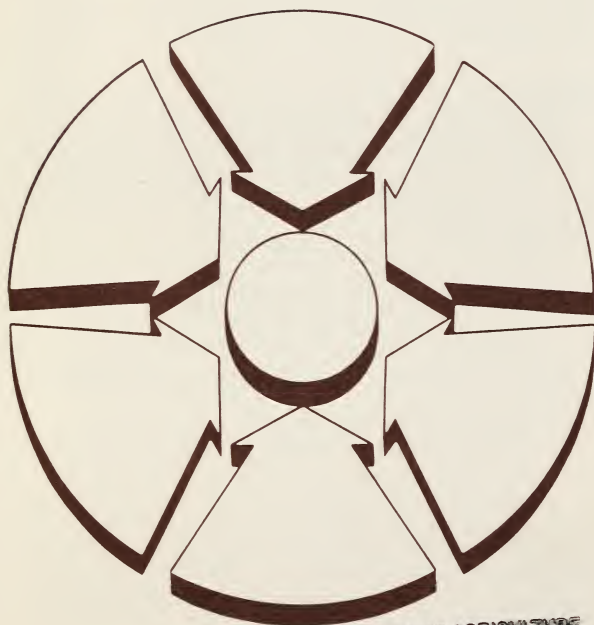
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# How ARS Works To Review Research Programs



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## **How ARS Works To Review Research Programs**

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The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has developed a Program Plan to guide its research into the 21st century. This Plan identifies the main problems that confront the agricultural industry and charts the minimum number of courses of action that will provide the research needed for solutions. Developed under the leadership of ARS senior staff, the Plan reflects contributions from more than 500 ARS scientists and consultation with colleagues from the universities and industry.

The first phase of the Plan includes a catalog of research options ARS may consider over a long timespan—the next 20 to 50 years. The second phase of the Plan considers implementation of certain of these options over the next 6 years—1984-90—assuming constant dollar funding for this time period. The third phase of the Plan—operational planning—is the action phase in which decisions are made about which programs will be strengthened, which programs may be deemphasized, and where the research will take place.

### **Objectives of the Plan**

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The six objectives of the Plan develop the means to:

- Manage and conserve the Nation's soil and water resources for a stable and productive agriculture;
- Maintain and increase the productivity and quality of crop plants;
- Increase the productivity of animals and the quality of animal products;
- Improve the system for delivery and conversion of raw agricultural commodities into food and useful products for domestic consumption and export;
- Promote optimum human health and performance through improved nutrition; and
- Integrate scientific knowledge on agricultural production and processing into systems that optimize resource management and facilitate the transfer of technology to end users.

The six objectives describe the aims of ARS scientists. The words "develop the means to" are important. ARS is a research agency; farmers and ranchers, action agencies, and the private sector will actually achieve the stated objectives.

### **Program Reviews and Workshops**

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The research is organized into more than 4,000 projects and is conducted by more than 2,600 scientists at about 150 locations across the country. Each ARS center or laboratory annually prepares a report on its plans and progress. The agency formally reviews—either in program reviews or workshops—each scientist's

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research at least once every 3 years.

Program reviews are organized to determine whether current and projected research programs are consistent with the mission and established priorities of the agency. These reviews also assess progress and productivity of the scientists and determine the effectiveness of team research. Consideration is given to personnel assignments, allocation of resources and facilities, need for program changes, and ways to strengthen research.

Program reviews are classified as multilocation, single location, and special. Review panels include research leaders and scientists from the laboratories under review and scientists from other Government agencies, the academic community, and industry.

In *multilocation reviews*, research programs on a given commodity or on a specific problem area that involve ARS scientists at more than one location are examined in depth.

In *single-location reviews*, the total program at an individual center or laboratory is reviewed. For a large center or laboratory, this review covers only a manageable segment of the total program.

In *special reviews*, specific programs at an individual center or laboratory are reviewed, and major attention is given to interactions within the location and with cooperators. Examples are reviews of management effectiveness and efficiency and of compliance with biological and occupational safety in the workplace, both of which directly affect research programs.

Workshops are problem-solving or research-planning meetings on specific topics. They may be functional or commodity oriented and may be national, regional, or local in scope. Workshops are scheduled to review the state of the art in a field or discipline, to identify problem areas, to coordinate plans, and to act as an open forum which encourages the creative exchange of ideas.

## **Scheduling, Reporting, and Followup**

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The National Program Staff (NPS) is responsible for all aspects of conducting and reporting on a program review or workshop. The sessions are carefully structured to ensure development of needed information and efficient use of time, with maximum opportunity for making constructive decisions.

Reporting and followup are important parts of the review process. The NPS prepares a summary of the program review or workshop within 30 days after the event for review by the ARS Administrator, participating scientists, and other officials who request it. Appropriate actions are taken by ARS managers on report items needing attention before the next Program Review.



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## **Impact of Review Process**

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The review process facilitates an orderly attack by scientists on important current problems and helps to ensure well-organized, cost-effective research programs that are consistent with the mission of ARS.